

How to keep your brain sharp in older age

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New research has revealed which mentally engaging activities best keep the brain sharp. Credit: University of Exeter

New research from the Global Council on Brain Health (GCBH) has revealed which mentally engaging activities best keep the brain sharp.

The research, involving Professor Linda Clare, of the University of Exeter, a member of the GCBH governing board, has concluded that doing puzzles and mind games isn't the most effective way to keep our brains healthy as we get older.

More than 1 in 3 people surveyed by Age UK said that doing puzzles and mind games was likely to be the best way to keep our brains healthy as we get older.

But GCBH, working with Age UK and the AARP, have said in new research that the long-term benefits of these '[brain](#) games' are little to

non-existent.

Their research showed that if we play a brain game several times, despite getting better at the game, there is little improvement in our thinking abilities.

The research reveals which mentally engaging activities do have a link to keeping our brains sharp.

Examples include learning a language, practicing tai-chi, taking photography classes and investigating your genealogy. Physical activities that involve mental engagement (such as dancing or tennis) are also important.

It is especially important to include social engagement as part of these activities, such as volunteering and mentoring others in your community.

This advice is not just relevant for older people - we should be maintaining our brain health from as young an age as possible.

Professor Linda Clare, of the University of Exeter, said: "Engaging in mentally stimulating activities helps to maintain your brain health. This is true at any age - it's never too late."

Age UK's Chief Scientist, James Goodwin explained: 'Even though it's never too late to learn something new, the overwhelming message from the report is that you shouldn't wait until later life to try to maintain your [brain health](#).

The younger you start challenging yourself with mentally stimulating activities, the better your brain function will be as you age.'

Tips from the experts

- Find new ways to stimulate your brain. Novelty is important to continually challenge it.
- Study something you are interested in. Set achievable goals and reward yourself along the way with something you find relaxing in order to gradually increase your involvement in the [activity](#).
- Use life stages and transitions such as moving, changing careers or retiring to try new mentally stimulating activities.

Myth-busting the brain ageing process

The report has also goes against many of the myths commonly believed about getting older:

1. You can learn new things, no matter your age
2. Dementia is not an inevitable consequence of old age
3. Older people can learn a second language
4. Older people are not doomed to forget things

Provided by University of Exeter

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